Skeletal Earth / The Ending of Time

Rebecca Tudor and Jacqueline Riemer

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I have long admired the Mary E. Black Gallery for reinforcing the interconnectedness of art and craft and recognizing that they are irrevocably interwoven. This exhibition is a case in point. When the Gallery suggested these two artists meet and discuss the possibilities of having a joint exhibition, they were again putting their philosophy into practice.

Jacqueline Riemer calls herself a visual artist and Rebecca Tudor, a tile maker. They have come to work with clay by such different routes. Riemer chose raku as the process best able to support her concepts, whereas there never was a question of Tudor choosing clay. Clay has been her medium since graduating from NSCAD in 1987. Tiles, more specifically, captured her attention during an off campus study in Italy in 1985. Moving from art to craft and craft to art, both Tudor and Riemer use their materials within that continuum to respond to place, to their own specific physical surroundings.

Jacqueline Riemer has focused her studio work, since graduating from NSCAD in 1996, on a comprehensive three part sculptural installation, Ocean Trilogy. *The Ending of Time*, the second part of this trilogy, continues her investigation into the human condition using the ocean as metaphor. It consists of four components:

Two glass-layered windows, *Tide In* and *Tide Out* are the ocean view from the artist's window, insistently mimetic, with raku shards building the observed land forms at high and low tide plus copper wires representing the actual power lines that intersect her view.

The Bluebird of Happiness Love Seat, a found Bluebird bench, is old, weathered, and uncomfortable, with a beautiful patina of time; Riemer calls it her self portrait.

23 Raku fired vessels in *Tide Pools* are filled with concentric layers of glass, which are symbolically the ripples of water (ideas).

Riemers's choice of Raku technique is a curious blending of the oriental and western approaches. The Zen aesthetic of finding beauty in what is and cherishing and accepting the accidents is an important concept for her, although a challenge. Some of the bowls cracked in the reduction phase. At first this was upsetting, but after reflection the mended cracks became a valued visual element of the total work. Her choice to hand build (coiling) gives a faint nod to the traditional aesthetic, but she wanted a true circle. Therefore, she built her bowls inside a positive and negative mold. All of her choices of materials and methods have been given careful consideration over a long period of time. "I wanted the look of Raku's black and white crackle. That is exactly what the shore looks like in winter at low tide with the sparkling skin of ice over the rocks and blackened seaweed."

Historians trace the development of raku to a Japanese potter, Chojiro, of the 16th century whose work, and those of his descendants (known as the Raku family), continues to be closely associated with the Japanese tea ceremony. Traditionally the bowls are hand built to look natural, unassuming and somewhat irregularly shaped. Raku was introduced to the western world in the 1950s and quite quickly was transformed and distanced from the very traditions that inspired its existence. It became synonymous with experimentation and chance, and for that reason finds resonance with many contemporary artists.

Rebecca Tudor, the founder of Tudor Tile, thrives on the collaborative nature of commission work. While tiles have long been associated with architectural design or as a support design element, Tudor is using clay as a fine art medium to express her ideas. She uses majolica glazing on bisque red earthenware and adds layers of stains, which are sponged on for the final firing, to achieve a depth of colour. She has explored grout as more than a binding material by using it as a painting medium, adding various colours and

creating different textures.

Tiles have an ancient history going back to the beginning of stone and brick construction. Tin oxide glaze was discovered over a 1000 years ago in the Near East. In Europe, it received its name from the island of Majorca, which became a centre for majolica floor tiles in the 15 and 16th century. This glaze over glaze painterly technique spread throughout Europe, England and eventually to America in the early 1900s. Very little happened in innovative tile work after the depression, and the post war design sensibilities of spare, minimalist design and stark materials left interest in tile design out in the cold. Fortunately ideas change. Recently there has been a renewed demand for handmade tiles because of contemporary interest in texture, surface design, and colour. In Nova Scotia there has been a steadily growing interest in majolica due in large part to the work and influence of NSCAD professor Walter Ostrom.

To prepare for this exhibition Tudor put her commission business on hold to give herself time to explore her own ideas and experiment with her medium and to work alone. The piece, *Skeletal Earth*, marked the beginning of this series. The skeletal fragments/rock shapes and forms hover between reality and invention. The carefully observed rock tones have been recreated with skill. The material reality of clay made into facsimiles of the very rocks that ultimately become clay enters into our walking space in *Waiting for Africa*. Solid material forms of *Wave Rock* transform into an ocean wave on the brink of change. These nine painterly ceramic works, created specifically for this exhibition, are large substantial works that question our ideas of reality and explore our relationship with the natural world.

Tudor's interest in developing this body of work germinated on a trip to the Czech Republic, specifically the Cesky Raj, where the connection between the remarkable sandstone formations and the narratives of the people living near them had profound implications for her, living as she does by another very distinctive rock-bound landscape. Myths, such as those of the Czechs, not only give expression to communal values and practices and to fears both conscious and unconscious, but in their retelling link peoples through time. The rocks Tudor pondered in Port Joli, Gooseberry island, and Pleasant Point have been sculpted by the elements into unfamiliar, yet oddly familiar formations-- organic shapes, glimpses of body parts. The spirits within captured her imagination. The ceramic panels in this exhibition give resonance to this emotive power of the landscape.

Riemer and Tudor both call a portion of the Atlantic coastline home. Rocks, tides, and weather, the constant ebb and flow, the infinite stretch of archeological / geological time and the finite arc of human time have seeped into their very beings and are an integral part of their daily lives. Their own familiar landscapes are potent ground for both artists. While they both have their feet firmly planted on the 'skeletal rocks', their sights are focused in different directions. Tudor feels the rock surfaces, the indents and the roughness, and reaches into the crevasses. Hers is a sensory tactile experience of knowing the materiality of the forms - an earthiness. Riemer is looking to the horizon and beyond, through the layers of water/glass, past material reality, to a view of eternity. Together their work stretches the landscape experience.

Curated by Kay Stanfield, 2003

Kay Stanfield (BFA, NSCAD, 1987) makes handmade paper reliefs and sculptures in her Dartmouth studio, teaches watercolour painting and occasionally curates exhibitions.

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Jacqueline Riemer

Jacqueline Riemer was educated in Ontario and worked for CBC Radio production in Montreal and Vancouver. In 1987 she returned to school, graduating with a BFA from NSCAD in 1996. Her studio/home is in Bayside, N.S.

The Ending of Time (installation components)

Tide In (window with seascape)
Steel frame, wood, glass, raku shards, copper wire, 6' x 30" x 6", 2000.

Tide Out (window with seascape)
Steel frame, wood, glass, raku shards, copper wire, 6' x 30" x 6", 2000.

Tide Pools
23 Raku bowls, from 4" to 30" in diameter, 1999.

The Bluebird of Happiness Love Seat
Rusted steel frame from a Bluebird school bus, 45" w x 36" h x 29" d, 2000.

Rebecca Tudor

Rebecca Tudor is a ceramic artist living in Little Harbour, Shelburne County, N.S. She received her BFA from NSCAD in 1986 and now devotes most of her time running the Tudor Tile Co., designing and creating tile projects for clients from the United States,Canada and abroad.

All pieces: earthenware, majolica glaze and stains, coloured grout.

Waiting for Africa (Port Joli, N.S.)
5'9" x 3' wall, 3' x 3'4" floor, 2002.

Wave Rock (Port Joli, N.S.)
2' x 5', 2002.

Skeletal Earth (Gooseberry Island, N.S.)
4' x 1', 2000.

King Narmer (Gooseberry Island, N.S.)
6'6" x 2'6", 2002.

Untitled, 4' x 1', 2002.

Alluvium (Gooseberry Island, N.S.)
2' x 5', 2001.

Inherent Course, 4' x 1', 2001.

Untitled, 1' x 4', 2002.

Cognizant Form, 64" x 26", 2003.

Top Front Cover: Rebecca Tudor, **Wave Rock**
Bottom Front Cover: Jacqueline Riemer, **Tide Pools**
Top Back Cover: Jacqueline Riemer, **Tide Out**
Bottom Back Cover: Rebecca Tudor, **Skeletal Earth**

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